



## 2008 Board of Supervisors Candidate Questionnaire

Candidates, please complete each question to the best of your ability in order for NPC to assess your "Park Friendly" rating. All responses will be posted on our website for the public to view. Text boxes expand to accommodate longer responses. Thank You.

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District: 11

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Return to Sunya Ojure electronically at  
[sojure@sfnpc.org](mailto:sojure@sfnpc.org) by Friday, September 19<sup>th</sup>

### 1. In what ways do you feel parks contribute to the quality of life of San Francisco residents?

Like our libraries, our parks form the City's great commons, spaces that everyone can access to use for recreation and enjoyment. Our parks bring our communities together. Take the Excelsior Playground for instance. Before 2003 when the new park was built, the Excelsior Playground had few visitors and many saw the park as unsafe. After the reconstruction, the playground became the site of community life where people no matter what their ethnicity or income level shared. The new park creates a sense of community, belonging, safety and neighborhood pride. Parks provide activities for families, children and seniors alike. If kept in good working order discourage blight and transform communities and civic life.

### 2. What park in your district do you use most and tell us what you like most about it.

I use most of the parks, but especially the Excelsior Playground. I take a great deal of pride in the E playground. I helped to bring community members together to design the new playground. I worked with community members to stage neighborhood festivals at the playground, three years in a row. My children grew up with this playground and I spent many hours pushing my kids on the swings and chasing them around the fields.



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I also love McLaren Park, which is a couple of blocks away. I love the open spaces and natural areas, the dog pond, the Crocker Amazon playground to the south and Herz Playground to the north. McLaren Park is one of San Francisco's major destination spots.

I believe Brooks Park in Merced Heights is one of the best-kept secrets in San Francisco. I love the sweeping views and the ruins of the area's agricultural history. The community garden there is the product of the neighbors taking back a park that for years had been neglected by Rec and Park and had been the haunt of drug dealers and vagrants for years. Its a testament to the power of community organizing.

I also use Balboa Park Playground and the Minnie and Lovie Ward Recreation Center.

### **3. Which park in your district appears to need the most help and what do you propose to do about it?**

John McLaren and Crocker Amazon Park need the most work and I will fight for city funding to make major renovations in these contiguous parks. Crocker Amazon needs better upkeep of its recreational facilities. I want fix the Bocce Ball courts so that the 30 or so people who use the courts everyday can shelter from the cold and the wind and new roof for their indoor course. I also want to improve the existing course as well. Bring in new material and concrete to modernize the course and make it more user friendly. The fields are in great need of repair from decades of gophers tearing up their earth and sod.

Crocker Amazon needs better lighting throughout and landscaping in its printer. The fences surrounding the parks are in great disrepair. I will work to create a short term and long-term schedule for the park and work on the budget and capital planning committees to fulfilling some of its needs in the months and years to come.

### **4. From your observations, what are the 3 most important issues facing recreation and parks in San Francisco? How will you begin to address these issues if you are elected?**

1) Raids on the Park Funds: The park budget, including the Open Space fund, acts as a slush fund for the Mayor's Office and the parks are always the first place that the city taps for funds to fill other priorities in bad budget years. I want to create a new funding stream for our parks through a combination of



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parcel taxes or increases to out of town users fees. I also like the idea of a regional park assessment district that can share park facilities across municipalities and counties. I would like to explore funding streams from new developments in up and coming neighborhoods like the Eastern Neighborhoods to create park and open spaces the neighborhoods that will be built.

- 2) Lack of Equity in the Parks System: The city provides too much space for more narrow interests and limited activities such as golfing and not enough for other uses that are more popular and even egalitarian. I am interested in removing the Lincoln Golf Course and using the space for other park uses such as soccer and special events such as outdoor weddings and public gatherings. The Lincoln site is exceptional for its remarkable location and incredible views. This should not be a site that is only available to golfers but to all San Franciscans who wish to enjoy outdoor space at this prime location.
- 3) The Rec and Park Department has unclear and overlapping boundaries for Project Area Managers. If there's anything certain about bureaucracies in general and the RPD bureaucracy in particular is that bureaucracies tend to divert and defer responsibilities. I will seek a more manageable system of accountability that may be based on the Supervisorial District system. That way, residents have a clearer recourse for getting their parks maintained and serviced.

**5. NPC's ParkScan program indicates that the majority of problems reported by the public relate to misuse of parks by city residents. These conditions cost the City millions of dollars in staff time to address. Would you support NPC's proposal for the city to fund a public education campaign aimed at reducing misuse such as littering, graffiti and vandalism in our parks?**

Yes

**6. The Recreation and Parks Department estimates that we are 200 gardeners short to keep up our parks to a good standard. Also, many common complaints from park users have to do with deferred maintenance such as broken irrigation parts and hazardous trees, largely the result of too few maintenance personnel and far too little funding. The Controller's City Survey 2007 indicates many residents**



**continue to be dissatisfied with park maintenance. What do you propose to improve park maintenance?**

I want to make sure that each park has a consistent and adequate gardening staffing and short term and long term maintenance assessment and schedule. For the parks in my district, I will work closely with residents and park groups to assess how the RPD is keeping up with these schedules.

I will serve on the Capital Planning Committee to ensure that are parks are adequately gardened and maintained in the City's annually revised 10 Year Capital Plans. I will seek additional funding for park maintenance on this committee and on the Board of Supervisors Budget Committee, upon which I also wish to serve.

I will look for revenue from cost savings within the department that may be derived from redundant management level staff as well as redundancies at the same level in other departments.

Ultimately, I want to get new funding streams for our parks from increased taxation and user fees.

- 7. RPD has just developed work plans for each park but the plans do not clearly outline the tasks that volunteers can assist with. At the same time, efforts to reduce staff overtime require volunteer work parties (which usually take place on Saturday) to involve 15 or more—effectively eliminating many possible hours of volunteer assistance. With our parks being understaffed, volunteers are a critical way to bridge the maintenance gap. Do you support adding to the current work plans the specific tasks that volunteers can assist with? Also, in an effort to reduce staff overtime, would you support the creation of a program that would certify community members to volunteer in the parks without direct staff oversight, similar to DPW's adopt a street program?**

Yes and yes

8. ParkScan.org is a public portal that enables park users to report maintenance concerns to the Recreation and Park Department (and even include a photo!). Please ParkScan a park near you and describe the maintenance issue that needed attention in your park. If elected, would you



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like to receive regular reports on the conditions of parks reported in your district?

Yes

9. More than two dozen San Francisco playgrounds received failing grades in NPC's bi-annual Playground Report Card this year. Would you be available to participate in a workday to raise the grade of a failed playground?

**Note: To check which playgrounds in your district might be on the list, please check NPC's Playground Initiative Report Card at [www.parkscan.org](http://www.parkscan.org).**

yes

- 10. NPC's Green Envy study identified many neighborhoods that lack playgrounds and neighborhood parks. (see enclosed map). Another survey (put the link here to Leon's study) by a national consultant indicates that San Francisco is deficient in soccer fields and opportunities for hiking on trails or community gardening. Do you have ideas to address these deficiencies?**

Yes. As I wrote above I am in favor of converting the Lincoln Golf Course to soccer fields. I also want to create trails in some of our major parks like John McLaren Park. The natural areas problem of this and othe parks needs to be appreciated and enhanced by the City. I want to convert as much open space as possible for park uses such as gardening. I love Brooks Park and how Peter and other residents have take over the park for their purposes which include gardening. I think it's really important to encourage greater participation and volunteerism in our parks programs. I want to take down the barriers to participation and encourage greater interaction with better-trained park staff to who can promote and handle higher levels of volunteerism.

We need more parks in District 11 and will work with residents to convert suitable land for park and open space uses.

- 11. The City provides start-up funds to establish Community Benefit Districts. Would you support additional funds in the city budget to establish Park Improvement Districts (PIDs) to supplement park maintenance and provide funds for some ongoing capital needs in our parks such as irrigation systems and repairing playgrounds?**

Yes



**12. Are you aware that over 700 acres of park land is dedicated to golf in San Francisco (6 public golf courses) even though it has been identified as a low priority recreation in the 2004 Recreation Assessment (see above) and that each golf course requires 250,000 gallons of water a day? The Rec and Park Department is proposing to lease out 4 of these courses for 30 years, despite the need for more than sixty new baseball, softball and soccer fields just to meet current demand in these sports. What is your position on retaining so much golf land at the expense of other recreation needs?**

I think it's wrong and underscores the inequities in our park system and overall society. I will work to get more broad uses out of our park system.

**13. San Francisco currently has no city-wide open space requirement for new development. In areas such as the Eastern Neighborhoods, which are already deficient in open space and could see a tripling in residential density in the near future, this oversight could create unlivable communities severely deficient in parks. Would you support a city-wide open space requirement for all new residential development so that every neighborhood can have green space for play, exercise, and respite from urban life?**

Of course!